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ABSTRACT

This paper explores a model of professional development that theoretically extends to new teachers a bridge from inquiry-oriented preparation into the first years of teaching. Inquiry-oriented teacher education habituates novice teachers into professional habits of heart and mind that are difficult to sustain given the reigning modes of professional development which often pair novice teachers with mentors. The alternative form of professional development involves creating collaborative teacher learning communities that foster critical friendships. This paper explores the multiple levels of teacher learning and development that arise from critically friendly teacher learning communities, examining a 3.5-year, voluntary collaboration among nine teachers and two university researchers. The case study draws on ethnographic methods including observations, interviews, reflective writing, videotapes, and documents. Findings indicate that novice teachers in this setting refine and define inquiry practices, teaching beliefs, peer relations, and teaching practices. Results hold implications for teacher education and professional development in terms of fostering structural and normative supports for collaborative inquiry to support the development of novice teachers. (Contains 47 references.) (SM)

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Collaborative Inquiry Among Novice Teachers as Professional Development: Sustaining Habits of Heart and Mind

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April, 1998

Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of AERA
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Abstract

This paper explores a model of professional development that theoretically extends to new teachers a bridge from inquiry-oriented preparation into the first years of teaching. Inquiry-oriented teacher education habituates novice teachers into professional habits of heart and mind that are difficult to sustain given the reigning modes of professional development which often pair novice teachers with mentors. Ironically, as educational theorists have taken up the call for community in schooling and particularly have identified a need to foster teacher learning communities, the communities are rarely envisioned for novice teachers, teachers at a point in their careers when they are most likely to reject their pre-service as they move into survival mode. This paper also explores the multiple levels of teacher learning and development that arise from the collaborative inquiry, spanning a three-and-a-half -year, voluntary collaboration among nine teachers and two university researchers. This case study draws on ethnographic methods including observations, interviews, reflective writing, videotapes, and documents. Findings for the research indicate that novice teachers in this setting refine and define inquiry practices, teaching beliefs, peer relations and teaching practices. This study holds implications for teacher education and professional development in terms of fostering structural and normative supports for collaborative inquiry to support the development of novice teachers.

Problem Statement

Inquiry-oriented teacher education habituates novice teachers into professional habits of heart and mind that are difficult to sustain given the reigning modes of professional development. Ironically, as educational theorists have taken

up the call for community in schooling and particularly have identified a need to foster teacher learning communities, the communities are rarely envisioned for novice teachers, teachers at a point in their careers when they are most likely to reject their pre-service as they move into survival mode (Huberman, 1992).

The aim of inquiry-oriented teacher education programs is that pre-service teachers undergo a critically reflective process as they examine unexplored assumptions about teaching, learning and education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1991). In these programs prospective teachers participate in collaborative activities structured around the exploration of teaching dilemmas (Bullough & Gitlin 1991). Questions are prized and easy answers eschewed. Programs aligned with "critical" inquiry explicitly prepare "teachers as change agents" encouraging them to alter the conditions of schools within which they work to serve students more equitably. The prospective teacher in these programs is initiated into habits of experimentation, reflection and action. They become habituated in collaborative practices, placed in "caring and dialogic" groups in which they explore challenging educational issues. The assumption is that with the support of peers, university supervisors and cooperating teachers, pre-service teachers can collectively inquire in order to better act on situated dilemmas of teaching and learning (Maher,1991; Richert, 1991; Teitelbaum & Britzman, 1991; Bullough & Gitlin, 1991).

Early professional development is often conceived as induction. There is a serious disjuncture between inquiry-oriented teacher education and professional development as induction -- a model especially designed with the new teacher in mind. The success of induction as professional development (Huling-Austin, 1986, 1992) often rests on mentor teachers to deliver new teachers from their novice status. Mentoring, though, is an ambiguous endeavor that sits atop many assumptions. One assumption is that excellent teachers of students know how to teach peers about what they do, how they do and why they do (Feiman-Nemser,

1995). Even if mentors could begin to articulate professional actions and personal justifications, mentors must still overcome institutional norms of isolation and self-reliance that complicate their hopes to help newcomers (Little, 1990a). Furthermore, this asymmetric relationship fosters uni-directional teaching and learning. Mentors often develop and orchestrate special "workshops" which echo the fast-paced, hands-on professional development that places the recipient novice teacher in a fundamentally passive role. There are fewer incentives which govern mentors in orchestrating peer observation or facilitating talk arising from the needs and agendas of the new teachers. And yet, there is persuasive literature on professional development advocating that teachers play a central role in designing and directing their own professional development (Clark, 1992; Little, 1992).

There is another vision of professional development that may be more aligned with inquiry-oriented teacher education and help bridge the gap between pre-service and in-service development. Educators have taken up the call for fostering "teacher learning communities" (Barber, 1992; Barth, 1990; Dewey, 1916; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; McLaughlin & Talbert 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989). Advocates of community hope to foster shared values, interconnectedness and an ethic of care among teachers (Sergiovanni, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Meier, 1995). Learning communities are lauded for an inquiry stance which is meant to embrace critical reflection. Critical reflection is both a capacity and a process to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions of teaching and schooling practices and to imagine alternatives for the purposes of changing conditions (Dewey, 1916; Gardner, 1991; Newmann, 1994; Westheimer, 1995). Such critical reflection may foster alternative perspectives and thus serve to counter myopia and stagnation within the community. Studies have shown that teacher learning communities influence effectiveness and enable teacher learning and growth (Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Little, 1990). However, such research on teacher learning communities has

predominantly reported on communities of experienced rather than novice teachers.

This paper will explore collaborative inquiry among novice teachers as professional development in the context of a specific teacher learning community which reflects a three-and-a-half-year, voluntary collaboration among ten teachers and two university researchers at Stanford University. In 1994 - 95 the participants were students in Stanford's Teacher Education Program (STEP); in the 1997-98 school year, they are seven third-year teachers working at seven different school sites. The group met weekly in their pre-service program and monthly during their first three years of teaching. The group continues to convene to deliberate about emerging values, philosophies and pedagogical practice. In addition they discuss and collaborate on the development of curricular experiments drawing from the principles and pedagogy suggested by Ann Brown and Joseph Campione's (1997) "Communities of Learners"(COL).

Theoretical Frame

The theoretical underpinning for this work draws from the literature of inquiry-oriented teacher education (Bullough & Gitlin, 1991), teacher learning communities (Little and McLaughlin, 1993; McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993; Lieberman and Miller, 1990), and critical reflection (Louden, 1992; Schon, 1983; Shor and Freire, 1987). We propose that the promising core practices of teacher learning communities may extend to novice teachers a professional bridge from their pre-service to first years of teaching.

The literature of inquiry-oriented teacher education espouses teacher reflection, experimentation and collaboration. Inquiry-oriented teacher education structures collaborative settings for pre-service teachers to reflect and share their

beliefs about teaching, in hopes of exploring their assumptions for the purposes of developing and changing practice. The pre-service teachers collectively inquire with university supervisors and professors, cooperating teachers, and peers (Maher, 1991; Richert, 1991; Teitelbaum & Britzman, 1991; Bullough & Gitlin, 1991). Such inquiry includes curricular and pedagogical experimentation, reflection on practices, collective discussions and debates about practical dilemmas and assumptions about teaching and learning, and school contexts (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1991; Bullough & Gitlin 1991). Programs aligned with "critical inquiry" explicitly prepare teachers as "change agents" to alter and transform school conditions to better meet the needs of all students.

These habits are important to introduce to professionals entering the field; yet, without nurturing and further development in their novice years, these habits may lay fallow or die. Thus, we turn to the literature of teacher learning communities which seems to offer a promising model that reinforces the habits advocated in the pre-service programs described above.

Professional development theorists who advocate teacher learning communities see such collaboration as a site of support and reassurance from peers (Johnson, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989) and emphasize caring relationships (Sergiovanni, 1994). Alternatively, the literature of critical reflection emphasizes the professional nature of teacher interactions, the role of questioning and challenging others' underlying assumptions in order to improve practice and in order to alter conditions of schooling in order to make it more just (Carr & Kemmis, 1983).

Teacher communities are defined by their collaborative endeavors, shared norms, values, and practices (Van Maanen & Barley 1984 cited in Little and McLaughlin, 1993, p. 137;Westheimer 1995). Such communities may range in form from a handful of teachers voluntarily meeting informally (Helms 1996) to a mandated team or whole school collaboration (Hargreaves 1994, Little 1990, Siskin

1994), to a network of teachers across schools (e.g. Bay Area Writing Project; Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1996). They may also vary in their norms and practices. One community may engage in "story swapping" (Little 1990); sharing experiences about teaching and students for the purpose of commiseration. Others may practice "joint work" that fosters interdependence as teachers work collectively to solve problems, raise questions or engage in changing practices (Little 1990). McLaughlin and Talbert (forthcoming) have begun to differentiate between a "teacher community" which they define as a collection of teachers from a "teacher learning community." They describe a "learning community" as providing an "inquiry stance" towards students, reforms, and teaching.

For the purposes of this study, we define the teacher learning community as a group of teachers across schools which considers itself to be engaged in the same sort of work; which shares to some degree a set of values, norms and practices, and is engaged in inquiry for the purposes of changing teaching and schooling (adapted from Van Maanen and Barley 1984, cited in Little and McLaughlin, 1993).

We have come to identify the core activities within teacher learning communities as "critical friendship" (Achinstein & Meyer, 1997). Critical friendship as professional development is a model of collective inquiry that champions the co-construction of knowledge through talk. It is a practical model of professional development that merges ideological and technical concerns, a model that places the teacher outside of school as she examines classroom and school artifacts with a cohort of caring peers. It is a model that reinforces participants' continual reevaluation of teaching, learning and school. A critical friend is a trusted person who offers critique of anothers' work (Costa and Kallick, 1993). The friendship comes from a stance of advocacy towards the work; the critique from a deep questioning of it. Furthermore, critical friendship offers participants access to multiple perspectives (Maher, 1991) and critical challenges in a climate of mutual

vulnerability, risk-taking and trust (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Bullough and Gitlin, 1995). Such communities support teacher learning, encourage experimentation and professional development and might be especially important for novice teachers as a site to sustain pre-service ideological habits of heart and mind.

Critical Friendship

Critical friendship is a process that involves teachers in the practice of reflection and critique within a climate of trust and support. The foundation for the critical work of inquiry is sustained by a shared history, reciprocal relationship, an advocacy stance, interdependence and an ethic of care. Though critical friendship is more than the sum of critique and friendship, we explore the elements of each component below.

Critical

The "critical" component of critical friendship draws from the literature of critical reflection that emphasizes the role of questioning and challenging others' underlying assumptions in order to transform practice. Critical reflection combines reflective practices (Schon, 1983) and critical education theory (Freire 1983; Shor and Freire, 1987) and involves the teacher in thinking, criticizing, and transforming the current conditions of work and schooling; it is a process of questioning "taken-for-granteds" (Louden, 1992) in order to change practices and conditions (Kemmis, 1985 cited in Zeichner and Tabachnich, 1991).

In particular, the critical piece of critical friendship solicits *reflection and deep questioning among peers*. Critical friends regularly question each other in order to bring to the surface and name tacit assumptions. Critical friends ask each other "do your practices fit with your values?" They engage in inquiry that challenges their

own and others' assumptions or practices. This may involve "hard" feedback or "pushing" questions that provide a catalyst for change.

Critical friends *offer multiple perspectives* to each other. Another "set of eyes" provides teachers competing understandings of their practice and schools. These varying viewpoints serve to complicate rather than simplify conceptions of teaching. Further, new perspectives may generate alternatives and foster the creation of new beliefs.

Critique is in the service of *focusing and changing beliefs and practice.* Critical friends experiment and sometimes cast off past beliefs and practices based on their collective inquiry. Such changes put teachers' collective inquiry and reflection into action. This is the praxis component of critical friendship, where changes are enacted after a cycle of inquiry and questioning about beliefs.

Friendship

The "friendship" component of critical friendship has been less explored by educational researchers. The friendship derives from the participants' shared history, reciprocal relationship, advocate stance, ethic of care and interdependence.

A *shared history* or common set of experiences over time is an important dimension of friendship. Bellah et. al. (1985) refer to such bonds as forming a "community of memory"- one not quickly formed but that has a history defined by its past. This type of personal and professional connection is a challenge for teachers because of the unstable nature of their professional ties due to teacher turnover, mobility and career paths. But critical friendship relies on such bonds over time.

A *reciprocal relationship* in friendship involves equal relations between participants who both give and receive advice and criticism. The non-hierarchical and non-punitive relationship of friendship is a notable contrast to most school relations where teachers are often judged (evaluated) by administrators or "given"

advice by more expert (read: higher status) teacher colleagues. Such reciprocity also means each friend must be willing to share her work publicly (making herself vulnerable), and to critique the work and ideas of others.

Friendship reflects a stance of *advocacy and an ethic of care.* Critical friends are advocates of one anothers' work. This stance involves a level of responsiveness and attentiveness to one anothers' work. Teachers' who have an insiders' perspectives on each others' work contexts, goals and practices provide a certain kind of feedback that supports the goals of their individual and collective work. Responsiveness to relationships and an awareness of connections and responsibilities to each other forms an important component of friendship. Gilligan (1982) calls this view an ethic of care. This type of caring is often identified between a teacher and her students, and is less often among colleagues. Noddings explains, "Teachers will also have to build in time to talk to each other about their own growth as well as that of students. They will have to offer each other moral support, intellectual/academic help, and solid friendship" (1992, p.179). Meier identifies that with friendship comes responsibility. She advocates that "teachers...accept responsibility for both their own and their colleagues' teaching" (Meier, 1995, p. 143).

Critical friends do "joint work" (Little, 1990); that is they engage in *interdependent collective work* building from each others' capacities. Collaboration stems from working on a common endeavor. Further interdependence refers to the co-constructed knowledge that results from their discourse. Collectively, teachers draw on each others' knowledge, legitimate each others' experiences, and construct common knowledge. Such knowledge can help teachers develop their own values and practices.

Critical Friendship for Novice Teacher Learning Communities

The literature on teacher learning communities reports predominantly on communities composed of veteran teachers. Given the optimism for teacher learning and change based on critique, and teacher support and sustenance from friendship, we were hopeful that the practice of critical friendship within a teacher learning community would hold particular promise for novice teachers. The novice teacher literature is disheartening as it depicts new teachers struggling with alienation, isolation, attrition, lack of support, and conflicting educational norms as they transition from teacher education programs to school sites (Huling-Austin, 1986; Dworkin, 1987; Bennett and LeCompte, 1990; Veenman, 1984).

We believed that practicing critical friendship could enable new teachers to remain in the profession and to successfully navigate their new educational environments. As another consideration, we thought that novice teachers' on-going participation in such a community could counter the appropriation of conservative or mediocre routines of their school contexts (Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986) as the critical friendship practices bring to the surface implicit institutional presses that affect who the teacher wants to be.

However, even in our optimism, we were aware that critical friendship is a complex process fraught with tensions. Particular tensions could arise when teachers, novice or veteran, balance friendship with critique. A novice teacher learning community would by its very nature draw a set of teachers together during a point in their careers when: a teacher might be more in need of support than challenge; a teacher's need to consolidate practices might outweigh her desire to receive or offer critique in order to deconstruct practice; a teacher's induction into practice might be hindered by possibly conflicting normative beliefs held by the school site and the learning community.

The Research Question

Given our genuine optimism about critically friendly teacher learning communities, and given our concerns about how to support teachers as they make their way into the profession, we wanted to know what such practices would look like when enacted with novice teachers. Thus our study asked:

> What promises and dilemmas emerge from the enactment of critical friendship within the context of a novice teacher learning community?

Research Setting, Design, and Methods

Research Setting

Background

This study draws from a three-year, voluntary collaboration among nine teachers and two university researchers at Stanford University. This study sat within a larger consortium of researchers' efforts at Stanford, University of California at Berkeley, and Vanderbilt University funded by the Mellon Foundation to study Brown and Campione's "Fostering a Community of Learners."[1]

In this study, the teacher community, STEP+, was composed of self-selected members, each of whom graduated from Stanford University's teacher education program (STEP) -- a fifth-year, combined masters and credential program. The program is aligned with the traditions of inquiry-oriented teacher education

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[1] Brown & Campione's curricular philosophy suggests a vision of classrooms as communities within which students take responsibility for the collective learning of deep, disciplinary ideas and concepts. Some of the specific instructional features include teachers maximizing opportunities for students to learn through talk. Additionally, the teacher utilizes recurring participant structures like "Reciprocal Teaching" (RT) to foster students' interdependent work, work that involves research, sharing, and performance. Ultimately, the hope is that the classroom that has a "dialogic" base, authentic inquiry and assessment, as well as ample opportunity for metacognition, provides students with the skills to learn the content and processes necessary for lifelong learning.

(Tabachnich & Zeichner, 1991), meaning that students are encouraged to become reflective practitioners. They enter the field having kept reflective teaching journals, having conducted action research, having written case studies of their practice, and having regularly examined dilemmas of teaching, both their own and others'.

Each member of this specific group of teachers enrolled in an elective offered within their pre-service program, titled "Fostering Communities of Teachers as Learners"(FCTL). The course was intended as a design intervention in which a community of researchers could gain some insights about how novice teachers learn about, implement, and analyze the "Community of Learners"(COL) philosophy. During this two-quarter course, which met once per week for two hours, the student-teachers collaboratively designed interdisciplinary curricular units which many of the teachers subsequently implemented at their respective school sites and analyzed in various forums at Stanford. In short, together they explored notions of community building in their classrooms, emphasizing student collaboration and interdependent research projects.

A subgroup of the teachers from the original pre-service continued to meet voluntarily for three years beyond pre-service in spite of the fact that they worked at different schools and school levels (middle school and high school) and taught different subjects (mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies). The group met every month for about three hours at a teacher's house for a meal and a discussion.

This novice teacher group collaborated in developing and implementing interdisciplinary curricular units and exploring beliefs and practices around "communities of learners" principles. They engaged in reciprocal classroom observations in person and through the collective viewing of video-tapes. These

shared experiences have provided and reinforced a set of shared norms centered around the exploration of community.

Of the nine teachers who participated during the first three years, six are women and three are men. They range in age from 24 to 35 years old. One is Latino and another Asian; the rest are white.[2] The two university facilitators (the authors of this paper) are doctoral students in teacher education each with six+ years of teaching experience at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. They were also the instructors of the pre-service course, "Fostering Communities of Teachers as Learners." One is female and the other, male; both are white and have taught in urban settings.

Facilitation

The role of the facilitators (and co-authors of this paper) in this group should be briefly examined. Much has been written about the inequitable power relations generated in settings where university-based researchers enter into "collaboration" with teachers (see for example Cochran-Smith, 1994; Connelly and Clandinin 1994). The political nature of the interaction traditionally privileges university-based knowledge, incorporates its language and interests while eclipsing those of the classroom teachers. To the degree possible we did everything we could to support lateral relations within the group. As has been noted, the original group of first-year

[2] Over the three years beyond pre-service, of the original nine participants five teachers left the group and two new members joined. After the first year out, two teachers left: one of the exiting teachers was not a classroom teacher, but a residential advisor in a boarding school. She struggled with her relationship to this teacher group since she was not in the classroom. The other departing teacher is discussed within the paper. After the second year out, two more teachers exited. One of these teachers left the classroom in order to work more closely with adults. The other teacher, who had co-founded a network of novice social studies teachers, left in order to devote more time to that. During the third year out, another teacher departed claiming that he had developed ties to others sites of professional development more closely linked to his current, third year needs. Of the new teachers, one also graduated from the STEP program and had gone through a similar course at Stanford on "fostering a community of learners." The second new teacher, a school site colleague of a founding member, joined during the third year out.

teachers approached us to help them forge a group. Given our high regard for the teachers based on the rewarding nature of our prior work during pre-service and given our optimism about the benefits of teacher learning communities, we readily acquiesced in participating. Furthermore, the participants, themselves, developed and refined the process and content of our meetings. For example, teachers identified the action research model and case-writing as two goals for the group's work.

In retrospect, we found the job of facilitating to be a complex balancing act in supporting open-ended inquiry, modeling certain habits of critique we identified as important for the group, and trying to constantly assess where we as a collective wanted to move next in our work. Work outside of the meetings often involved doing what the teachers could not or did not want to do. We wrote, collated and mailed meeting notes; we xeroxed articles that members of the group wanted others to read; we purchased video equipment that the group wanted; we coached teachers on the phone about how they might present their work to the group; we located and then accompanied teachers to grant-writing workshops and professional conferences.

The protocol for meeting

The protocol for meeting evolved over the years, flexibly meeting the needs of participants, individually and collectively; over all, the meetings revolved around two central rituals. These rituals emerged in the fall of 1995 during the teachers' first year out of Stanford. In each meeting, in addition to a meal, there was nearly always a "check-in" followed by a "charrette."

"Check-in" evolved into a structure in which all participants, one at a time, reported what was going on in their lives, personal and professional. In one-on-one interviews conducted at the end of the third year of this study (June, 1997), many of

the participants said they valued check-in for providing them a means to share and hear about how their pre-service friends were progressing, personally and professionally.

Check-in was followed by another ritual, the "charrette."[3] Charrettes are formal inquiry-based protocols centered around the presentation and subsequent discussion of teacher-selected artifacts (e.g. a videoclip of a student seminar; a one-page account of a pressing dilemma). In the charrette, the teacher presenter brought an artifact, set the context for it, and provided the group with a frame or focus in which to respond to the artifact. What ensued was a discussion that attended to the particular artifact and related ideas, issues, and experience.

The charrettes ended after either the presenter or the facilitator indicated that the time for discussion was over; the entire process generally transpired in 20-90 minutes. At the end of the discussions, sometimes a member of the group summarized the discussion, at other meetings, participants wrote for about five minutes in journals. At some of the meetings, time was set aside for a "charrette update" to hear about how the presenter felt or acted on the prior charrette.

Although there was a certain consistency to the charrette-process, it was dynamic for the simple reason that the artifacts were always different (e.g. one discussion might be focused on a teacher's collegial dilemma, whereas another might be focused on her students' reading). Additionally, the purposes of the teachers tended to vary with regard to the type of response they wanted from their peers. As a result, the character and quality of the ensuing discussions tended to vary as well.[4]

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[3] *Charrette* refers to a protocol used in architecture schools and firms. The process involves an architect's presentation of a project to a critical cohort. Often the project is one that is soon due to be presented to a client. Therefore, the critical feedback from peers is a useful response that an architect keeps in mind during a final revision of a set of architectural plans.

[4] Although the group began meeting in August of 1995, it was not until the group's fourth meeting that the charrette process had been tried. After a sixth meeting, the group decided to

Research Design and Methods

To understand the complex and dynamic nature of a teacher learning community, we chose a qualitative case study design using ethnographic techniques. The case study approach encompasses an attempt to gather richly contextualized data as a way to make sense of complex phenomena (Yin, 1989). Ethnographic methods of interview, observation, questionnaire and document collection were important in understanding the process of how novice teachers within one community engage in critical friendship. While case studies reflect specific rather than generalizable populations, these methods used to study this novice teacher group supported our efforts to "build theories" that could illuminate ways of understanding similar circumstances (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989).

This case draws from a collaboration between two university researchers and nine teachers spanning their first years of teaching. This collaborative study originally sat within a larger consortium of researchers' efforts at Stanford, University of California, Berkeley, and Vanderbilt University funded by the Mellon Foundation to study the practice of "Fostering a Community of Learners."

This particular ethnographic case study draws from multiple data sources: audio-taped and video-taped recordings and transcripts of teachers' weekly to monthly meetings; field notes of observations and conceptual memos of the same by participant observers engaged in facilitating the teacher meetings; field notes of observations and videotapes of classroom teaching; semi-structured individual and

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revise their expectation that three, twenty minute charrette discussions would be satisfactory. Eventually the group decided that meetings would include only one charrette discussion. Other issues that were debated included whether or not the facilitators should have a chance to do a charrette. In April, 1997, one of the facilitators presented.

focus group interviews of the teacher participants; questionnaire about the meeting protocol and inquiry process and documents including teachers' curriculum units, reflective journals, and case writings. The co-authors of this paper engaged in facilitating and researching along side of the teachers. Such a stance enabled greater access to 'an emic" perspective on community membership.

Based on Miles and Huberman (1994), the qualitative data was analyzed on two levels. The first level involved preliminary coding. This process aided in the development of descriptive as well as interpretive statements that lead to the major findings. Codes are "retrieval and organizing devices that allow the analyst to spot quickly, pull out, then cluster all the segments relating to the particular question, hypothesis, concept or theme" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Some codes were predetermined based on our understanding of pre-service and teacher learning community literature; but we also generated new codes based on the data. This process was necessarily iterative, entailing the generation, revision, and regeneration of codes.

The primary function of these codes was to summarize segments of data. For example, preliminary codes included "support," "learning," and "experimentation." Over time, the data forced us to reexamine these codes. New emergent codes included, among others, "critical inquiry" and "friendship" which forced us to revise our conceptual framework.

The second level of analysis included generating pattern codes. Pattern codes are codes "that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation.... [T]hey are a sort of meta-code" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 69). Analysis of the data produced themes with which we then recoded the data. One such theme, "critical friendship" identified a pattern within participants' interactions that highlighted practices of inquiry and support among the teachers. Another theme identified

"Footprints" which captured how participants referenced and refined their pre-service work in light of teaching experiences.

Critical Friendship Enacted

Friendship as Contributing Context of Critical Friendship

A context of "friendship" shaped the teachers' experiences of "critical friendship." This context not only describes the factors that shaped the kind of relations and discourse enacted within this novice teacher community, but, at the same time, is often a feature resulting from those interactions. Thus, we identify friendship as a "contributing context," which describes both the necessary conditions for teachers' inquiry and critique, and the resulting relations within the novice teacher community.[5]

There was a foundation of "friendship" that generated an island of support in the often chaotic sea of beginning teaching. Martin said, "It's like these are my friends, these are my trench warfare companions, you know? Here we are on the trenches of the public school system" (1:1 3/97).[6] Savannah described that the group "helps me to put things in perspective when things are crazy at school," and Sarah said, "I know for me I think part of it was an emotional connection. It was support ...and we're all facing some of the same issues" (fgi 5/96).

The novice teachers of this collaborative became advocates of one anothers' work and demonstrated a strong ethic of care for each other. Meetings always started with sharing a meal and checking in on each others' personal and

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5Westheimer (1995) identified "contributing feature" that both describe a teacher community and the processes involved in its formation (p.22).
6 All participants were given pseudonyms and quotations from interviews and meetings were given code numbers to maintain confidentiality.

professional lives. These "check ins" offered friends time to reconnect, confirm bonds, reassert sympathetic relationships, as well as share successes. The norm was for participants, one at a time, to give brief (except in rare occasions) portrayals of what they were doing professionally and personally. As David described, "It was really nice and important to hear how other people are doing professionally, and personally because we didn't see each other that much. When I personally checked-in I valued the acceptance and the interest that all of us take in each others' life" (1:1 6/97).

The following excerpt from a first-year- out transcript demonstrates the mutual support typical as a teacher "checked in":[7]

Melissa:	Let's see. My kids are doing some really cool projects.... We're scheduling for our freshmen, they're presenting a portfolio of all the work they've done this semester. And so, I was so busy with that, that I didn't any time to... do anything for my sixth period today. And... I had them create their own test for Tuesday...
Betty:	Excellent!
Melissa:	...and they LIKED it, and it was SO GOOD (laughing)!
Maddie:	Wow.
Savannah:	Oh, that's great.
Melissa:	But I didn't have time to do it, so... so I was really glad that I actually made it through the whole day without any major fuck-ups at all. (Quiet laughter from group.)
Savannah:	Mmm. Yeah. (mt 1/96)

Along with supportive exclamations came knowing laughter in recognition of the difficulties of day to day teaching.

Many identified that the group was unique to their early experience of interacting with other teachers. Below two teachers speak to the personal ties the teachers had to one another and to the support they felt in contrast to the isolation sometimes felt at the school site:

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7 This check-in occurs in the group's fifth meeting.

> It's the fact that we know each other [that's unique about this group]. And we don't just know each other as... okay, we get together, and... we just talk about this stuff. I mean, we know about what's going on in each other's lives, and..., we've had experiences together that are not just this [meeting time]. (1:1 6/96) [8]

> We realized in developing our [curriculum] unit and working together... how important teacher support is.... It was someone to talk to, and work with. And I'm pretty isolated where I am this year.... So I came into [this group] with [an interest in] a curriculum angle, and have since just loved coming to the meetings. I think, "Oh, I'm gonna feel so much better in three hours." So it's been largely other teacher support I think. (fgi 5/96)

This experience may have been particularly important for novice teachers who regularly had feelings of isolation, as well as confusion as they transitioned from teacher education programs which fostered innovation and progressive teaching to school sites that did not invite nor support that preparation. Members continuously identified that this setting offered a "unique space" and interactions that contrasted with their school site relationships.

The concern, care and trust set a necessary context for the hard work of challenging and changing one's own practice. Sarah explained, "People were just very concerned and I think that attitude just came out of the friendship from STEP ..inside and outside [of our STEP year]. So we had a community concern to build on, and individuals wanting to be the one to ask the good question, to be the one to really push" (1:1 6/97). For the participants there was a connection between the development and maintenance of community and the willingness to inquire. One teacher, David, wrote in a case, "I was reluctant at first to share [a] video with [the STEP+ group] since I, myself, was not pleased by watching it. But the group has

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8 During each of the first, second and third years out, the teachers planned and met for overnight retreats, year-end celebrations, case-writing conferences; some of the teachers went on specially planned hiking trips.

cultivated a safe environment by which I felt comfortable bringing my classroom to be viewed in this group" (cw 6/97).

Friendship was identified as being crucial to the inquiry process. Below is one teacher's illustrative response to a questionnaire prompt "what is the most essential quality of a charrette discussion."

> For me, the most essential quality is being able to relate incidents/ experiences in one classroom to larger questions in the practice of teaching. Hmm...maybe that's not a quality. I think it's vitally important for all members of the group to feel a sense of community/ willingness to be open in revealing issues we face in teaching. In many ways, doing so is going out on a limb a bit -- so knowing you have a supportive group in which to question and study your own teaching is important. (anonymous, cq 11/96)

The work of this group depended upon on reciprocal relationships as peers shared their practice. The teachers opened their classroom to the scrutiny of their peers, sharing classroom artifacts (student work, teacher writing or videotape footage). As they engaged in critical and supportive feedback, no one single individual held a privileged authority; rather peers shared in mutual risk-taking and exchanging of ideas. One member explained,

> When we sit down and talk about what's going on here, it's not the same as when you're at your school site... where there's someone sitting in a different position, they're maybe in a position to judge you.... With our group, it's not really a [status thing].... We don't look at our discussions that way at all. (1:1 6/97)

This member continued, by saying she found "a level of trust" within the group and a common agreement that "the intention of everybody there, is not to find fault with things, but rather we're kind of building and discovering things together." With regard to the other primary ritual of the group, the charrette conversations, most participants reported a significant level of "responsiveness" from peers which David explained in the following way:

> To be responsive, to me, means when I give an idea,...whether the [members of the group] are accepting of the idea or whether they are challenging the idea, they really listen and they are interested. So responsive means they respond and that lets me know that my input is valued, whether they agree or disagree. (1:1 6/97)

The interdependence and shared work further strengthened the friendships of this novice teacher community. The teachers worked on a common endeavor - inquiring about practices of fostering community in their classrooms. By collaborating on curriculum units together, by sharing their collective experiments on fostering talk and establishing collaborative norms in their classrooms, and by reviewing each others' case writing on community, these teachers engaged in "joint work" (Little, 1990). Over time, as they collectively began to construct new understandings and meanings together, they were developing as a learning community.

For some, this experience offered a vision of the sort of collegial work that was missing from their school sites. One teacher reported how the group provided a place to nourish her commitments and sustain her habits of heart and mind when her school site left her unfulfilled.

> Last year where I was in a [school] environment that didn't gel with my ideas about teaching, and I felt that the environment I was in was very restricted and that my ability to teach, the way I wanted to teach, was very restricted. I felt like it was a destructive, not a constructive environment, and meeting with the group and talking about what my ideas were and what was going on there helps me to see that my ideas were still ideas I could focus on and work on in a classroom, and that it didn't have to be the way it was in my school, and maybe that wasn't the school for me. (1:1 6/97)

Ultimately, this teacher switched schools to one that better fit with her beliefs and one that had a more collaborative faculty setting.

The positive collaborative experience of STEP+ may have supported some of the others in seeking out other such professional opportunities. Two teachers from the group started another novice teacher collaborative focused on Social Studies. One teacher developed a departmental collaborative to view videos of classroom teaching at his own school site. And most of the others became engaged in professional networks and school site collaborations. Whereas in pre-service the teachers were encouraged to interview prospective peers about the opportunities for collaboration when they sought out a job, two and three years out, some of the teachers tailored these "community" opportunities themselves.

In closing, this professional development offered beginning teachers a site of emotional support, a place where they could expose and explore vulnerabilities, as well as inquire into the dilemmas posed by their teaching. This may have been particularly important for novice teachers who regularly had feelings of isolation, as well as confusion as they transitioned from teacher education programs which fostered innovation and progressive teaching to school sites that did not invite nor support that preparation. Members continuously identified that this setting offered a "unique space" and interactions that contrasted with their school site relationships.

Practicing Critical Friendship

When critical friendship is enacted members of the group convene to share work in progress, to respond to that work and to offer critique in the form of hard questions. This work is different than more traditional forms of teacher group

interactions that involve "show and tell" or end with "fix it" responses. One member, Tim, explained,

> We'll throw out an issue. People will make comments about it, but not like, you should do this, this, and this. But, 'I've done this, think about this,' and I think there's a general level of respect. If someone comes with a question, we understand they've already put some thought into it. They may already have some ideas of their own, we're just trying to illuminate it, maybe help them look at it in a different way, as opposed to just, 'here is my answer for you.'[9]

The members of this group used the episodes of discussion to explore issues arising from their practice, often raising fundamental concerns about education, often rethinking their practice and beliefs in light of the discussions. Martin claimed:

> "it is with these peers that [he] talked about the foundations upon which we base our everyday practice...in the STEP+ group it's focused on an issue that [a] teacher holds dear that they're willing to put out in the open for some and sort of a willingness to change the foundation upon which it's based"

The participants reported that their work relied on a collective ability to ask difficult and challenging questions of each other. Martin described, "when I come to these meetings...we can challenge each other in ways that might not be comfortable" (Interview, June, 1997). Similarly, Maddie described that she had come to appreciate over the years "the awareness you were disagreeing and yet it was okay" (Interviews, 6/97). What Maddie and Martin alluded to is not solely the fact that participants disagreed but that their differing points of view were valued.

Although the group was tied by its shared pedagogical and normative commitments, the group embraced a certain level of disagreement. To the degree

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[9] This comment about the group's responsiveness and reluctance to prescribe solutions, made during a focus group discussion in response to a question about the group's process, is indicative of testimony offered by other participants in all focus group interviews (2/96; 6/96; 6/97) and one-on-one interviews (6/97; 1/98).

that participants could tolerate different points of view and disagreements, discussions had the potential to set the table for learning.

A Case Of Critical Friendship Enacted

We have deliberately chosen this charrette conversation from the many we could have chosen from the three years. Like many from the second and third year out, it depicts the group's emerging capacities for enacting critical friendship; also like many of the discussions it is one for which the central questions pertain to the ambiguous role of a teacher in a constructivist classroom, an issue the group struggled with from the time they entered the pre-service class and continued to grapple with three years out.[10] In addition to depicting the emergence of "critical friendship," this case also illustrates the "footprints" of the teachers' work over time. "Footprints" identify references and refinements of pre-service norms and practices that the teachers make in the course of their first years out.

In reading the case, one can begin to appreciate the opportunities teachers have in these discussions to hone their inquiry skills while they refine their beliefs and practices. The presenter of the video explicitly stated his risk in sharing work for which he felt vulnerable, in a sense calling for support from his friends (comrades in constructivist practices); in addition, he received some deep challenges from his peers. Note how the presenter subsequently used the occasion to name his beliefs about learning and his peers responded by questioning him about the inconsistencies between his beliefs and practice.

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[10] Note: during the first year out, much of the fall meetings were spent in developing purposes, protocols and topics. It was not until the end of the first year out that conversations began to include the sorts of deep questioning more emblematic of second and third-year-out meetings. Thus we chose a second year-out to more fully demonstrate the potential and dilemmas of critical friendship.

David taught at a middle school located in an affluent San Francisco suburb. He had earned considerable recognition for his innovative math teaching, having spoken at conferences, having been named department head, and having received important grants. In spite of this success, while meeting with the STEP+ group, David often reported how his personal beliefs about teaching (aligned with constructivist pedagogy) had been challenged by school-site peers and in his district at large. Local newspapers reported about widely publicized hearings on the debate about mathematical pedagogy emphasizing the teaching of skills vs. more constructivist approaches.

To this particular meeting David brought two, eight-minute videos taken during whole class discussions and an accompanying transcripts.[11] The video he opted to show depicted David facilitating students having a conversation about percentages. After the video-viewing the group's conversation centered on the role teachers should take in constructivist classrooms.

David introduced his artifacts by saying,

> Before I begin, I just want to say, I'm showing you a [videoclip] in which I step out of my comfort zone. I could have shown you this other one here that I brought - which makes my math teaching look better. But the one I'm showing you, well, I wouldn't be comfortable showing it to someone I wouldn't trust especially someone who would be critical of my mathematics teaching. (mt 1/96)[12]

He requested that the STEP+ group comment on his teacher role: "I want to say that you're seeing a case of teacher restraint, a case of teacher restraint in service of student-driven learning." He meant that his "restraint" permitted his students the opportunity to set their own "agendas" for learning.

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[11] Note: The second video David brought to the meeting, which he did not show, depicted a "better", more optimistic view of David's teaching.

[12] Except when otherwise noted, all quotations in this section come the transcript of the second year out meeting.

The video showed David's students arriving at a topic, percentages and difference, that David never would have introduced on that day. And as the students were working on the problem, David allowed them to muddle on, even as they groped towards an incorrect answer, never discomfirming their misconceptions, choosing instead to write each student new idea/contribution on the overhead projector. David's participation in this classroom conversation involved eliciting his students' thinking on the topic, with a particular focus on having students respond to each others' ideas and reasoning. He followed a "script" that he had developed in which he would use certain prompts -- like, "That's interesting, what do you all think of that?" -- designed to encourage the students to practice 'good' listening and sharing of ideas.

The group applauded David's classroom norms that facilitated students' talk. Respondents praised David for the amount of "wait time" that elapsed after students had spoken (Rowe, 1986). After reading an article that one of the facilitators distributed on Rowe's research with the STEP+ group five months earlier, David had taken up "wait time" as a conscious experiment.[13] The group members marveled at the way his students talked and listened to each other. David intervened, "But don't you see? Eight whole minutes go by without the students getting the right answer."

Patrick, an English teacher in an urban, working-class neighborhood, shook his head in disbelief and smiled.

> Maybe I'm missing something, but I'm utterly baffled about the crisis! I would be thrilled if my students could sustain that level of talk for eight minutes, say wrestling about the meaning of the river in Bless Me Ultima ...Maybe this is a matter of your discipline. Maybe eight minutes of students having a good conversation is less problemsome in English where we often prize multiple interpretations versus math where we traditionally work to the right answer.

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[13] David cited and redistributed this article in Oct., 1997 during a discussion about the relationship between deliberate teacher moves and facilitating students' talking to learn.

Embedded in Patrick's comments was a tentative hypothesis that the disciplinary context, Mathematics, might be the primary problem since in his own discipline, English, "we often prize multiple interpretations." Additionally he proposed that David's anxiety might be too exaggerated given the quality of the student's successful social interactions. In a sense Patrick suggested that the content of the discussion was less important than the social interactions. In his response, David named his belief about learning and cited the incompatibility of those beliefs with those of his school-site peers:

> That's just it. I believe that to learn math, kids need to talk math, even if their talk is seemingly wrong. But, that puts me in opposition to my school district where...the local community continually pressures my math department to be more traditionally outcome-oriented instead of constructivist. That's why I feel vulnerable about this tape. A critic of my teaching will watch me let kids pursue their own agendas in my class for eight whole minutes without even getting the right answer.

Next, Mercy prefaced a question by commenting, "I'm tryin' to enter, in terms of the person who's gonna be critical that this went in a certain way." Before she could continue with her question in which she asked David to consider how he might be implicated in his students' misconceptions, David pre-empted her by asking, "Is this important to do? You guys? Take the side of the critic? 'Cause I didn't ask you to do this, but all of you have all of a sudden done this." In spite of David's reluctance to pursue "the side of the critic," discussion continued. Participants raised questions about the problem of allowing misconceptions to remain unaddressed.

Eventually participants challenged David's assumption that his restraint promoted student ownership of and learning from the discussion. Melissa worried aloud about students' equitable access to the rich discussion:

> Given that you think that kids need to talk math to learn math, I'm concerned about the kids who aren't talking in this tape. Don't you think there needs to be some equity in terms of access to the learning in your classroom, David?

Melissa spotted a number of students who had their heads on their desks in the videotape. David attributed the number of non-talkers to the complexity of the topic making it difficult to sustain with more than "eight to ten students" out of the twenty-five. David reported he had seen a continuing shift of "key players" in any given discussion, remarking that around 60-75% of the students had played key player roles over time.

Tom pointed to the accompanying transcript:

> I'm starting to think about the way you [introduced] this video as a case of teacher restraint. I think it's important to make a distinction. You clearly restrain yourself in terms of content; after all, you allow your students to pursue a topic of their choosing and to construct a wrong answer; but you hardly restrain yourself in the process.

The predominant pattern of talk included one teacher turn for every student turn. Patrick wondered, "David, do you see your norms of discussion as tools to ultimately prepare your students to take more responsibility while you gradually remove yourself from the loop?" David replied, "I have never tried to remove myself from the conversation, and I'm not at a point where I'm ready to do so. I have fun participating and I think my student-centered learning is teacher-reliant." In a final set of responses in this charrette, Martin gently challenged David to accept responsibility for the contradiction of his beliefs and actions.

> David, you have the answer and I'm confused about it. You believe that they talk math to learn math and at the same time, you have to acknowledge the control you really have in this classroom. You talk more than anyone, you decide who gets to talk, which topics you want to pursue, and whose ideas get on the chalkboard.

Using his own experience to challenge David's role of facilitating student learning, Martin explained he had been working hard to push kids to articulate their thoughts especially at points when their 'reasoning was faulty.' This opened another conversation about the role of a teacher in a "student centered" classroom. How can one guide and still permit student discovery? The meeting ended with many issues unresolved and new questions to pursue.

Epilogue. In a one-on-one interview a year later, David reflected on the importance of this particular conversation. He noted, "this was a pivotal point for me because...I left that meeting feeling like I need to pursue this idea," that having students enact 'good' listening and sharing was not satisfactory if at some point their talk didn't facilitate their learning of the content. He continued, "I guess I need to clarify this idea in my mind, what's important to happen" (1:1 1/98). Six months after the meeting, David wrote a case in which he reconsidered the videoclip and the group's discussion:

> I, as the teacher, was ineffective as a facilitator...I noticed that my questions to students during the height of this mathematical discussion were not helpful in pushing the students to consider more deeply the mathematics they raised (cw 6/97).

The conversation, and its central questions about students' learning both the content of discussions and the processes of interactions, were echoed in many meetings that took place thereafter. At a meeting the following year, Patrick referenced the same questions as he directed the group to look at a video clip of his practice which he described as "unrestful."[14] In this clip, a small seminar group engaged in a heated discussion. Most of the eleven students in the group embraced

[14] This meeting occurred in October, 1997. Other meetings in which participants deliberated about these topics included: 3/97, 4/97, 5/97, 6/97, 9/97, 10/97, 12/97.

a misconception claiming that because of her "dead baby," the central figure of Charlotte Perkins' short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper", was going crazy. There was no evidence of a "dead baby" in the story. Unfortunately, the students shunned the quiet, dissenting voice of a peer who questioned their evidence. In the conversation with his STEP+ peers, Patrick revealed that he envisioned that student talk about texts would help them make sense and would allow them to consider a variety of interpretations. Ultimately, he hoped that the talk would prepare them to write better interpretive essays,

In the STEP+ group discussion of the video, Patrick lamented that his students' ability to have 'good' discussions about the text did not necessarily guarantee their ability to make careful interpretations. He wondered about how to intervene. Naturally the group hearkened back to the second year out discussion about the same topics. Members of the group wondered anew about the relationship between talking and learning, about the teacher's responsibility for intervening during moments of misconceptions, about the evidence needed to "know" in the various disciplines.

At the next group meeting, Patrick described that after the prior meeting he thought about how to deal with his internal dilemma of how to "intervene" and still allow for student "discovery. " Patrick described how he elected to show his students the video of themselves in order to pedagogically tackle the problems of unsatisfactory work, both social and cognitive. He wanted the students to hear the voice of the dissenting peer a second time around in order to acknowledge that in seminars, group members need to pay heed to all the voices. He then had the students debate about the supposed "dead baby." He wanted to guide the students into another careful reading of the text so that they could learn to use the text as a primary source for confirming or disconfirming interpretations, and so that they knew that the source of the central figure's craziness was not due to a dead baby.

Analyzing Critical Friendship within Novice Teacher Learning Community

When we consider David's second-year-out conversation, in and of itself, and in relation to the larger set of conversations occurring at this site of professional development, we see the emergence of habits of hearts and minds through beginning patterns of critical friendship. In this section we discuss how the case and the subsequent work of the STEP+ group illustrate honing of inquiry skills that encourages participants to refine their beliefs and practices. We also describe how the conversation, and others like it, show the "footprints" that teachers leave behind at this site of professional development as they walk from pre-service into the first years of their career. These footprints explicitly refer to pre-service activities and conceptions of teaching in light of their novice teacher experiences.

Honing Inquiry Skills

David's charrette demonstrated emerging capacities for critical friendship among novice teachers. David as the presenter shared a problematic teaching moment that generated collective critique, as well as, support from peers. This charrette offered an opportunity for David to name his beliefs and for the group to challenge his assumptions. Over time, subsequent conversations on similar topics developed the capacity for membership within a learning community that honed the kinds of inquiry skills first introduced in the teachers' pre-service years. The members continually practiced habits of reflection, criticism, and collaboration that were often missing from their school sites. Furthermore, some teachers were able to transfer these habits of critical friendship to interactions with school site colleagues.

Ultimately, this charrette and others like it generated changes that resulted in members beginning to rethink their own beliefs and practices.

Naming Beliefs and Challenging Assumptions, Developing Capacities for Membership in a Teacher Learning Community

In sharing a problematic moment in teaching, David found an opportunity to name his beliefs and for the group to challenge his assumptions. In preparation for that particular meeting, David arrived with two videos in tow -- rather than showing the video where "the kids were all right," he chose to share the one depicting problematic practice that an unsupportive critic could showcase as an example of "what's wrong with constructivist teaching." The group's ability to inquire rests on the individual teacher's willingness to take risks experimenting in the classroom and in sharing practice, even problematic practice within this supportive setting.

In this case peers deeply questioned one another about practice and beliefs using a videoclip and the presenter's "questions" as a starting point. The group listened to David's question about whether or not his restraint was in support of student learning. While some brief remarks of support were heard, particularly about David's norms for student talk, instead of affirming his notion of "teacher restraint," they challenged him. They looked critically upon his work in allowing students to "glom on" to the wrong answer, a misconception that was put forth by one of the students. Furthermore, the group pushed David to name his beliefs about learning - "students learn math by talking" - and to reflect critically about the ten to fifteen students who were not talking in a given conversation. Peers challenged his assumption of "teacher restraint," given his domination of the conversation -- he talked after nearly every student. They also asked David to examine the possibility that the content of *his* teacher talk seemed more centered on fostering norms of interaction than on pushing students to be more critical of the

subject matter content of what they knew and their evidence for their answers. Essentially they asked him to acknowledge and reflect on his complicity in the group's eight minutes of 'good' talk about the wrong answer.

These teachers demonstrated that they were developing a capacity for membership within a teacher learning community. Three years out of their inquiry-oriented pre-service, the teachers continued to experiment and to inquire into their individual and collective practices. They exhibited habits of mind that would engender discussions about the complexity of dilemmas of practice, rather than those that would seek rapid solutions to simplify tomorrow's practice.

In the discussion about David's practice, members of the group pursued their critique, pushing ahead even as the presenter resisted. The skills of individual and collaborative critique became internalized as members posed their own questions in sharing their work and began to see their work in a critical light. Savannah speaks about the role of peers' ability to offer outsider perspectives allows presenters to see things they can not otherwise see:

> Again, it's the whole different perspective thing. That when... when we get together and we talk, we're getting another perspective... and it helps to... HEAR that other perspective, and how that relates to what we're doing. You know, if David's IN this, and he's totally immersed in this, and he's maybe not thinking. He's playing this huge role, but maybe hasn't thought about -- 'Hey, I could've pushed them this way, to help them take the discourse on their own.' You know, if he said maybe one or two sentences during the whole [class] period, maybe those two sentences would've pushed them a little further. But he, he's, you know--it takes someone who's looking at it from the outside, sometimes, to help you realize that. (1:1 1/98).

Here, in addition to talking about how valuable peers are for offering outside perspectives, Savannah reflects that the group was able to focus on the content of David's talk -- what it did and did not accomplish -- in terms of student learning.

David's topic is not simply one topic of many, but rather, one, issue or dilemma to be revisited, continually experimented with, a fruitful intellectual

challenge. Patrick commented on the relationship between the second-year-out discussion and the larger tapestry of the group's discussions:

> [We] take questions...like staples. There is a certain set of questions that we continually ask, and we apply them to new situations...like this thing about...content in conjunction with process, and how you get the two to work together. We've talked about that ever since Day One...I would hope that we would continue to do that...[keep] trying to puzzle out how it affects learning in [each] new situation (1:1; Jan., 1998)

Because of the complexity of the topic, the relationship between talking and learning, and the group's ongoing interest in the topic, their work continually forces them to entertain similar questions. Maddie echoed Patrick's sentiments about the value of this ongoing collective work: "We're just grappling with issues. We never solve them...they're not solvable. But grappling with them is important. And having a place to DO that is important" (1:1, 1/98).

Thus, this novice teacher learning community offered a site for members to name beliefs and challenge assumptions. It formed a crucial place for honing inquiry skills, particularly in light of the lack found at their home school site. In one-on-one interviews conducted in June, 1997 each of the participants repeatedly valued how these discussions helped them to "clarify their ideas about teaching;" they lamented the lack of opportunity they had to talk at their school sites about issues that transcended the "nuts and bolts of day to day teaching." The claimed that the opportunity to collectively and safely reflect on their practice was mostly unavailable at their school sites. Savannah and Kay comment on the dissonance between the STEP+ site and their respective school sites:

> The way my faculty interacts is very different from the way this group interacts, and that is because people don't know each other as well, or don't respect each other's ideas as much or are as interested in learning what other people are doing in their classrooms. (1:1 6/97)

> As far as the reason I am [planning to] leave the school right now is that I don't feel like I have a community of professionals to really work with there...There is too much talk about gossip about parents, and gossip about students, and complaining about this and that and its just very day to day...I don't feel there is any professional discourse. People complain about hours and procedures and not about teaching as an art or as a profession. (1:1, 6/97)

Despite the difficulties posed by not being able talk with peers in more satisfactory or candid ways, many members of the group talked about particular occasions when they tried to pose difficult questions of their school site peers as they had at the STEP+ site. One teacher talked about asking "questions that weren't being asked" at a district meeting on Portfolio assessment; another reported standing up at a school wide meeting to question why her peers were bickering over a statistically insignificant difference in percentage between the school's reading scores and the state average rather than talking more about their philosophies of instruction; another teacher reported on how he urged his grade-level team members to talk candidly about the ways they were interacting and the expectations that they had for their collective work.

Changing Beliefs and Practice

What are the results of these habits of critical friendship? Are they internalized by a presenter, members of the group? Do they affect changes in beliefs or practice? These are more difficult questions to answer, and yet, we are cautiously optimistic. Ultimately, the process of bringing critical friendship to bear on practice effected individual changes.

David used the occasion to reconsider his practice and his beliefs. He left the meeting thinking about difficult questions posed by his peers. A year after this charrette conversation, David showed a different videoclip of his students engaged

in a whole class discussion about how to estimate mass. In this discussion David took far fewer turns, sometimes allowing up to five students to interact without making one intervening comment. He reflected that he was now more able to step back, enabling more students to talk and respond to each other. His was now less concerned about how to set up norms for discourse and more concerned about what "effect this [has] on students' learning...two components: learning how to engage oneself in this process and [in] mathematical work" (1:1, 1/98).

Although it would be enough to think of the second-year-out discussion in terms of the presenter, David, a provocative discussion like this, in which peers push a presenter to clarify practices and beliefs, quietly affected the respondents as well. Martin commented:

> In this case - David's - in the back of my mind anyway, ..I'm thinking about MY teaching. And so if he brings up something I don't agree with necessarily, or that is puzzling to me, and the conclusion of which would mean that my personal teaching is a little off, I'm gonna' explore that. So I think that we pushed, pushed HIS experience, in order to not necessarily justify what we're doing, but to sort of question our own practices, and say, 'well I thought THIS. Is that right?' (1:1 6/97)

Martin's words portray how a discussion can penetrate the thinking of a participant, reveal an interior monologue of sorts in which a participant reflects on prior beliefs and practices. Another participant, Savannah, speaks about the future-oriented thoughts that these video-based conversations can inspire as well.

> I remember seeing his class set-up and how it did work with his kids and it definitely fueled ideas for the future, and that is a very satisfying feeling, that you're learning something from people you're working with that you can use it some way in your class to help your kids work with something...I think seeing those things gives me more ideas about how I can do it, by seeing what worked for them, and what might work for me, I feel more free about experimenting...(1:1, July, 1997)

The conversations also provided participants a chance to talk aloud about their practices and beliefs. Interestingly, in that particular, second-year-out discussion that Patrick claimed he would be "thrilled if [his] students could sustain that level of talk for eight minutes, say wrestling about the meaning of the river in Bless Me Ultima." Patrick had also wondered if the problem of misconceptions was more acute because of David's disciplinary setting, math.

In the third year out, Patrick had to reassess his second-year-out ideas. He was hardly "thrilled" when his English students had an engaging discussion and embraced a misconception. Like David, Patrick showed a video to his STEP+ peers that was problematic; and like David, he was anxious about how to address his students' misconceptions and lack of success in navigating the process of talking to learn. In Patrick's case members of the group talked about how to engender a "healthy skepticism" during discussions.

Presenters and respondents had a chance to reflect together about their collective and individual work. David, Patrick and Martin each claimed that the process offered them chances to refine their work and their ideas; Savannah claimed that the conversations helped her to envision practice that she could "experiment" with in the future.

Footprints: pathways walked from pre-service to the first years of teaching

If we hope to effect a lifetime of a teacher's work through one-year pre-service programs, it may be incumbent upon us to provide sites of professional development where teachers can build on, refine and even, reject the habits and values espoused there -- a place to walk the bridge. This novice teacher learning community demonstrated some of the potential of such a bridge, and offered glimpses of the pathway walked by teachers as they moved from pre-service to their

first teaching years. Inasmuch as this group is an outgrowth of a teacher education class, with each meeting participants took another step beyond pre-service. In the group's monthly discussions, participants regularly riffled through the figurative pre-service files of their minds, dipping into relevant beliefs and particular practices discussed there. They often marshaled ideas and habits that were "seeded" during their pre-service preparation. We take these moments to constitute the trail of "footprints" that participants leave behind as they walk the bridge from pre-service and refine their thinking in light of their early experiences.

There are footprints that track an evolution of beliefs. In the cases described earlier, the participants wrestled with the teachers' role in fostering "dialogic classrooms," a first principle that Brown and Campione advocate and that the pre-service class espoused.15 While the teachers valued developing classrooms in which their students did a considerable amount of talking, they continued to invoke their first, second and third year out teaching experiences as they explored the complexities of this sort of practice. In other words they used their inquiry habits (questioning, video viewing and case-writing) and their practical, classroom experiments as a way to learn more and more about the central topic of their pre-service class: "how to foster communities of learners." As the years passed the teachers' questions became more and more centered on how to foster dialogic classrooms with regards to the teacher's role in dealing with misconceptions and in conceptualizing appropriate assessment that accounted for social and cognitive growth.

Footprints are often quite transparent as the teachers explicitly referenced their pre-service readings, classes, professors, and case writing. In one second year-out conversation, one teacher described how her students' understanding of a text,

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15 In "dialogic" classrooms, teachers think of speech as a medium or curriculum for students' learning and discovery as opposed to speech to solely demonstrate what has been learned (see, for example, Hynds & Rubin, 1988; Barnes, 1995; Applebee, 1997).

the Constitution, was only "cursory" even though they had "reciprocally [taught]" each other -- a practice advocated by Brown and Campione, explored in the pre-service course. In that particular conversation, members of the group wondered about the suitability of the Constitution for RT'ing.[16] Additionally, David cautioned, "Brown and Campione say RT takes 20 days of straight work to make it work. I mean, so if you're gonna' try it once then you can't expect them to..." Martin extended this idea by reminding his peers of a CLADD, pre-service class in which an instructor extolled the importance of teaching kids a process so that it becomes systematic: "All she'd have to do is say, 'Okay, go ahead into your expert group jigsaw group,' and they're psyched! They're goin'! They know what it is." Melissa cited the case-writing of some pre-service peers who reflected that instruction, like RT, that was so fundamentally different than more "normal", day-to-day, teacher-directed reading instruction necessitated a lot of "scaffolding" because "the kids had no idea, how to complete some of these behaviors." Kay urged the group to take into account the contingencies of Brown and Campione's research: they studied how elementary-level students learned RT in pull-out sessions. Was their work really transferable to real live classrooms where teachers did not have the luxury of sending kids out to work with para-professionals?

Couched in that particular second-year out conversation, participants collectively summoned related pieces of theory, beliefs and practice authored by pre-service peers, teacher education professors and university researchers as they reassessed RT as a viable pedagogical strategy. Thus the footprints that are left behind from pre-service at this site of professional development include the general

[16] The question of what constitutes an appropriate text for RT had been a topic of conversation first talked about in Mar., 1995 and in several earlier second-year-out conversations (e.g. 9/96 and 12/96). In the Sept., 1996 conversation, members of the group cited the notion of the "sexiness of text" proposed by one their pre-service professors.

habits of inquiry and topics seeded in pre-service. The footprints attest to the importance of the bridge of this novice teacher learning community.

While multiple positive outcomes of enacting critical friendship within a novice teacher community have been documented above, we turn next to address some of the dilemmas exposed by STEP+ practices.

Dilemmas

"Critical Friendship" is a Difficult Balance

The enactment of critical friendship is wrought with tensions. For the two are not easy bedfellows. Being too critical can upset the enduring ties of friendship and being too friendly may jeopardize the ability to criticize. By looking more closely at the practice of critical friendship within the group's charrette format, we uncovered tensions or "seams" which exposed the uneasy marriage of critique and friendship (Achinstein and Meyer, 1997). These seams, disruptions, absences or breaks in the "natural order of things" or routines, are the moments of disjuncture or awkwardness within the charrettes. The seams indicate that critique does not come so easily or naturally for these members. In David's charrette, he made explicit his vulnerability and fear of criticism. He reminded the group:

> by JUST looking at this particular piece of video, it's not evident that there's , let's see...How shall I put this? I would not be comfortable, showing this, clip of video to somebody who I didn't really trust, especially to somebody who was going to be critical of my mathematics teaching. (mt 1/97)

His introduction signaled the limited amount of criticism he was willing to take. It almost sounds as if he was saying, "I can show this to you since I know that you are my friends, you won't be critical of my mathematics teaching." Later he explained

how his school environment was hostile to the way he teaches math, further consolidating a call for supportive, rather than critical feedback.

Another seam exposed in many of the conversations occurred when the teacher sharing his or her work was resistant to criticism. Critical friendship assumes that teachers not only can offer critical feedback but are capable of listening to or receiving criticism as well. What happens when your friend does not want to hear critique? When David was challenged to address the inconsistencies raised between his own vision of "teacher restraint" and practice, he made many moves that could be interpreted as resistance to critique. To one respondent, he retorted, "I didn't ask you to take the side of critics." To another, he said that he was not at a point where he wanted to consider changing his role. These moments expose the awkward seams of critical friendship.

Members struggled throughout their common work with balancing their roles as friends and critics. They were continually negotiating by checking in with each other about the kinds of feedback the presenters would like. They were at times uncertain about how critical to be when a teacher disclosed painful problems at their school sites. One teacher explained, "When discomfort happens in the group,...there's a whole lot of pussyfooting around, changing the subject, and whether or not we should go in a different direction, and whether or not somebody's, you know, should we let something go, or not let something go" (1:1 1/98). At other times they were unsure about how supportive to be during the critical questioning period of charrette presentations. When commenting on David's charrette, Patrick noted about his awareness of striking the balance between critique and friendship:

> He was not only defensive, but sort of blamed us for not understanding what it was he was feeling. And so I think, to come back to that conversation [about whether or not it was a case of teacher restraint in

> support of student driven learning] later was risky [while still being] beneficial. (1:1 1/98)

Patrick also commented on a third-year-out meeting that reminded him of David's charrette, saying that in both cases, he felt that the group was aware of "crossing a person's comfort barrier." In both cases he described being aware that a presenter probably wanted more support than critique, and yet that the critique was helpful for everyone:

> I think that Savannah wasn't expecting us to give her very much feedback on her project at all. And we DID cross a line with her...I don't think that she was ready to necessarily get feedback on it. I think that, that we all knew that. I think that there was a moment of tension when people started asking her questions about her artifact that...was similar to [David's]. I don't think we let it go, and I think that the conversation ended up being, really, a very good one for everybody (1:1 1/98).

Thus, critique and friendship formed a difficult combination for these teachers.

Novice Teachers Have Unique Needs

Taking on the mantle of friend simultaneously with that of critic is difficult enough. But what further complicates the dual roles of critical friendship are the conflicting needs of those involved - novice teachers who typically feel vulnerable during this period of survival. Given that one of the hoped for outcomes of critical friendship is that participation offers novice teachers a site of sustenance and support, we wonder if a process that prizes the deconstruction of practice and a process that invites vulnerability could be damaging to teachers who are in a point of their career where they are trying to consolidate their repertoires in order to cope. Further, the glorification of ambiguity and a no-closure mentality inherent in the inquiry process may leave new teachers confused and ill-prepared to face their daily challenges and lost in their process of forming an educational vision.

Often charrette discussions become a time to deconstruct the practice of the presenter. In one charrette the group deconstructed Kay and Martin's original planned assessment (Achinstein and Meyer, 1997). Even though in this instance the group reconstructed an alternative, neither of the teachers was able to use it.[17] As a result, the teachers were left with no final assessment in place. In another instance, the group criticized Melissa's enactment of Reciprocal Teaching as misconceived, yet did not offer other ideas and practices for her to try.

It is not solely that participants critiqued practices, but additionally, the group often cast a critical eye on members' emerging visions and philosophies -- something which may prove particularly difficult for novices. In David's charrette, while the group endorsed the presenter's classroom norms, they ignored him when he said, "I didn't ask for anyone to be a critic." Instead the group pushed David to consider how and why he was not challenging kids' for faulty reasoning.

As it turned out, David withstood a barrage of unasked for critique that made him reexamine his role in a classroom designed for students talking to learn. But discussions are never quite so tidy. In fact discussions occurring where participants value "deep questions" and "multiple points of view" often tend towards the ambiguous rather than clarification. With this in mind, a participant could easily leave David's charrette troubled by the unanswered questions. Can kids learn math by talking math? Can silent kids learn math when their peers talk math? What does teacher restraint mean? What is the role of teacher in facilitating student discussions? What is the role of the teacher in satisfying community values for learning?

As critical friendship veers away from closure and the solving of problems, one wonders how or if it meets the needs of those involved. Tim expressed

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[17] This is based on classroom observations of Kay and Martin's class during their implementations of an Enlightenment Unit and based on interviews with each of the teachers during and after that time.

dissatisfaction with the group on the grounds that he is "outcome oriented" and that he "didn't find as many connections to what [he] was doing in class to what we were discussing in the group" (ii, 6/96). He left the group after the first year out. Similarly, Martin left the group during the third year out because he felt that the work of the group had strayed too far from his everyday practice (phi 10/97).

In this work with novice teachers, we found that this group often needed support more than critique and were particularly vulnerable to questions of competence and feelings of uncertainty. On the other hand, we found teachers actively interested in this deep questioning and collective challenging in ways that their own school sites or other professional development opportunities would not offer. Conceiving of new teachers as active agents in collective knowledge construction places them in a different level than many mentor-novice circumstances. Thus, another issue posed by this study is understanding the particular needs of novice teachers. Even though we readily challenge the assumption that novice teachers value primarily support and reassurance more than reflection (Perez et al., 1997), we are well aware of their unique needs as beginning teachers. Thus a careful balance must be considered in fostering critical friendship among novices.

Novice Teacher Learning Community: A Bridge or a Chasm?

Did this alternative site for collaboration offer novice teacher a bridge from their pre-service experience to their first teaching years or rather, did it further the divide? In some instances members' participation in this group challenged their on-site community, alienating them from school colleagues. Martin confided that his school site colleagues resented his curricular collaboration with Kay (another group member), and they took this issue to the principal. His school site colleagues went to the principal, explaining that Martin was not a "team player." Martin's

peers and principal were upset that he had elected to teach this two-week unit in place of the required seventh grade curriculum. David described his own oppositional stance with his school community and worried about his prospects for tenure. He expressed difficulty in sharing his constructivist practices in mathamatics with school site peers and administrators. Melissa expressed frustration with the conservative, standards-driven context of her new school, limiting her enactment of "community of learners" practices to holding only two student-centered discussions per quarter.[18]

Even in this celebration of the enactment of critical friendship, we must ask whose friends are these? Because of the "outsider" status of this group, some critical friendship may go "unheard" or unenacted at the school site. There are few if any school site peers with whom a participant can further the conversation or with whom the participant can count on to help her carry out the plan for refinement or experimentation called for by the charrette discussions. Because this is a network of teachers from all different schools, the enacted change part of critical friendship is limited. One may ask whether these are the right friends, seeing that any impact on changing classroom and school practice would be bolstered by the support of on-site colleagues.[19]

Finally, a number of members have left their school sites and one even left teaching, calling into question our "bridge" theory. Kay left teaching after two years because she found that she was not fulfilled by the professional setting at her school, making it difficult to collaborate and carry on an "intellectual discourse" about the "art of teaching" (1:1 6/97). Savannah switched schools after one year. Melissa and Maddie switched schools after two years. Two other teachers are applying to

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[18] These examples come from first, second and third years out respectively.

[19] In the group's third year out, they began discussions about introducing new members into the group from the participants' school sites. Each of the participants elected to invite one colleague from their respective school sites. One of these teachers has joined the group as a new member.

graduate school for the upcoming year. We can only speculate about the relationship between this group and their career moves. Some might see this site as a place for teachers to critically reflect upon the match between their beliefs and their schools, enabling them to make informed decisions about work cultures that support their philosophies of education. Others might see this collaborative as driving a wedge between the teachers and their home sites, increasing tensions and not helping the teachers fit into their new settings. We hope the former is true and that part of the habits fostered by inquiry-oriented pre-service and extended by these novice teachers' learning community engenders a critical perspective on teaching as a career and enables the teachers to be active agents in pursuing a school context that fosters rather than inhibits the kinds of teaching they uphold.

Implications

This study holds lessons for research and practice. Before considering the implications of this study, we first briefly attend to its limitations.

Limitations

The first and most obvious limitation of any conclusions we draw is the limited nature of this professional development. Although the group met for some thirty, three-hour meetings during the teachers' first three years out of pre-service, there are many other factors that contribute to a teacher's development that this study does not explore (e.g. teacher biography; school setting; other professional development). Moreover, this group of novice teachers engaged in critical friendship is obviously not typical of most teacher collaboratives. For one, all participants graduated from the same teacher education program, are young, and are primarily white middle-class. Furthermore, in addition to their friendship, the

participants brought to their group habits of inquiry practiced during pre-service. The uniqueness of this setting makes us cautious of generalizations.

Another limitation is the unusual roles played by the facilitators. We spent a lot of time with the teachers during the pre-service and afterwards, facilitating the group for three years, researching the group's work. Sometimes these multiple roles became confusing. Balancing insider and outsider perspectives is always a challenge. We recognize the importance of our insider role, while understanding its limitations. Furthermore, while we were very involved with the teachers, we had less opportunity to regularly observe their classrooms and school sites and thus claims about changes in practice were often limited to a few visits, the videos the teachers showed us and their own reflections made during meetings and interviews.

Given these limitations of the study, and understanding that any implications that might apply to others must consider the context unique to this teacher learning community, we turn next to some final lessons.

Lessons of Critical Friendship within a Novice Teacher Learning Community

Because of the gap between inquiry-oriented teacher education and reigning model of induction for novice teachers, this study sought to examine the potential of enacting critical friendship as professional development for novice teachers.

"Critical friendship" offers a potential to sustain the habits of heart and mind and thus begins to form a bridge from pre-service to first years of teaching

In our case study of teachers moving from pre-service into their first years of teaching, we found they were able to sustain habits of hearts and minds within a

teacher community that enacted critical friendship. In particular, we found "footprints," direct references and refinement of pre-service norms and practices.

Unlike the induction model which relies heavily on the mentor-protege relationship, critical friendship offers novice teachers an opportunity to engage as peers, co-constructing knowledge and sharing support. And unlike induction, this model is more consonant with inquiry-oriented pre-service education. Furthermore, counter to some research on novice teachers, we found that this group was hungry for and excelled at reflecting upon their practice even within their first years of teaching (traditionally considered a survival or very practical period in teachers' careers).

Responding to the literature on new teachers, we found that this model of critical friendship sustained the teachers in a period of uncertainty accompanied by feelings of isolation, alienation and incompetence. The group extended friendships formed during pre-service, support to participants as they experienced new and sometimes troubling situations and in some cases, allowed a vision of community and collaboration that they sought in other professional settings.

While teacher collaborative inquiry and community is so widely encouraged and praised as a source for teacher learning and as a means for transformation, teacher educators need a stronger analytic and practical understanding about critical friendship, especially those committed to supporting teachers new to the field. This paper seeks to broaden the conceptual understanding of critical friendship and to illuminate the dilemmas posed by it. This case of a teacher learning community provides valuable insights about the justifications for and the complexity inherent in fostering critical friendships among novice teachers, something that bodes further study.

Future research could examine critical friendship in other settings to confirm or challenge the promising outcomes of this group. In particular, future research

might explore how other novice teachers make sense of, refine, or reject preservice-initiated beliefs and practices. This research might consider tracking the longitudinal impact of such a bridge, exploring implications for career satisfaction and durable changes in classroom practice. Other research could examine critical friendship in a less homogeneous settings. Research could explore the role of video and case writing in novice teacher learning communities.

While this study left us with great hope about critical friendship, we also learned about some of the challenges and tensions in practice. Thus, our second lesson addresses these dilemmas.

Critical Friendship must be fostered with care and attention to the dilemmas raised by its enactment for novice teachers

Critique and friendship form an uneasy marriage because of their oftentimes oppositional stance. We found that tensions arose in the practice of critical friendship among novice teachers that hitherto have been ignored by educational advocates of community-building. While advocates of community identify the potential for forming bonds of friendship in order to practice reflection and critique, we found in this novice community, that teachers experienced practical tensions in learning to negotiate a balance between critique and friendship. These teachers struggled with dilemmas of deconstructing through critique, while supporting each others' vision building. Even this seemingly low risk setting (with friends, not from similar schools, with no authority figures to evaluate), teachers still experienced awkwardness in developing a capacity to critique and transform their work collectively. Somehow those involved in facilitating groups of novice teachers must respect and safeguard the needs of new teachers. The point is not to retreat from advocating the "critical" part of critical friendship. In fact, we suspect

that friendship manifested over time helped to maintain the site as a safe place for deep questioning and reflection.

Thus the second lesson of this study for practitioners and teacher educators is that critical friendship should be fostered with care, and should be explored further to understand its dilemmas. Groups must be carefully structured to help participants recognize and confront dilemmas of critique and friendship. Even with the promise that critical friendship offers members, we cannot overemphasize the tensions that are posed by it. To help alleviate some of the tensions experienced by critical friends, ritualized participant structures need to be in place. A formal protocol like the charrette encourages individuals to share teaching beliefs and practice in a social setting where hard questioning can take place in a climate of trust.

Even with this regular ritual, facilitation of teacher learning communities is incumbent on careful modeling of critical friendship. This modeling involves personal risk-taking, probing criticism, and a sincere care for the personal and collective growth of the group. This is no easy task. There have been many times when we have privately wondered and publicly asked if our critical feedback and questioning went beyond what was wanted. As we reflect on our role in the group, we wonder, like Patrick in the case of David's charrette, if we should consciously be withdrawing ourselves from the loop, taking less and less air time; or conversely, we wonder if our ongoing critical role is a genuine and necessary characteristic of our participation.

Learning the language and gaining an ability to challenge peers critically comes with time and practice. The developmental process of critical friendship involves learning a new language and unlearning many teacher norms. This process is something that we think is worthy of further study. In this group we note that the work began with the co-construction of a curriculum unit. Early

conversations were often centered on the suitability of this poem or that magazine article. Gradually the teachers have moved from a preponderance of safe clarifying questions to some probing questions of beliefs and actions.

One must weigh the costs and benefits of fostering critical friendship in a teacher learning community situated outside of a school (a network). We are fully aware that networks like these are double-edged swords. On the one hand, a collective of novice teachers from multiple sites offer diverse perspectives (which may enable a greater critique of schools and schooling than insider groups) and a climate of support for teachers new to the field. They meet at a private residence, an alternative space that probably affords a certain freedom to explore various important dimensions of teaching, learning, and school that might not be as accessible at other sites of professional development.

On the other hand, even though these friendly critics continue to deliberate after three years, we have many questions about the viability of this group and others similarly situated. Such collaborations which sit outside of a school (or even the university as its university affiliation is somewhat tenuous at this point), may be unstable over time. Further, this network's "outsider" status may limit its impact on school change. If the goal of critical friendship is ultimately to change practice and schools, one needs to ask, which friends are more important? A network may at times even draw attention away from a teachers' commitment to her home school, or compete with school norms. Martin's network friends support his curricular experimentation at the same time that his school-site peers sanction him for straying from their teams' work. David's network friends support his constructivist stance even though it puts him in opposition to some of his school site peers and may put him at risk in his quest for tenure. Therefore, the work that goes on in the group may be incompatible with the individual teacher's work outside of the group.

If fostering critically reflective teacher communities is worthwhile in terms of the early development among professionals, then exploring more of the complexities and the needed supports for such endeavors is crucial. The experiences of this novice teacher learning community fill us with hope; they also incite further questions in our efforts to navigate the uneasy marriage between friendship and critique.

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